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SENSITIVE
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DEPT FOR AF/E
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PROP](#) [SOCI](#) [ER](#)
SUBJECT: ANTI-U.S. SENTIMENTS MARK ANOTHER ERITREAN
LIBERATION DAY

¶1. (SBU) Summary: As in the past two years, President Isaias used the May 24 Eritrean Liberation Day festivities to lambast the U.S. Administration for its policies on the Eritrean-Ethiopian border and in the Horn of Africa, and to blame the United States for virtually all economic and political problems facing the world today. The follow-on theatrical productions in Asmara and other cities focused this year on societal themes of teaching the younger generations of the precedence of duty to country over personal desires. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Anti-U.S. sentiment once again dominated the Eritrean May 24 Liberation Day festivities. (Note: The U.S. Embassy did not receive an invitation this year to attend the Liberation Day functions; we were the only resident diplomatic mission not invited. End Note.) In his speech, President Isaias assumed a belligerent, anti-U.S. tone. As expected, Isaias lambasted the U.S. position on the Ethiopian-Eritrean border dispute, noting the "failure of attempts on the part of the U.S. Administration to hamper the implementation of the Boundary Commission's ruling." The President continued his tirade by accusing the United States of "mass extermination of the human race" under the pretext of the Global War of Terror, and assigned U.S. responsibility for trampling democracy, undermining rule of law globally, world food shortages, global increases in terrorism, and skyrocketing fuel prices. The second half of Isaias's speech focused on Eritrean food security, and - surprisingly - he acknowledged "poor management" for the government's failure to date to achieve food security. Isaias counseled his fellow Eritreans against eating white bread, pasta, and other foods not produced in the country, until food security is achieved.

¶3. (SBU) As in prior years, the Eritrean government included as part of its nationwide festivities amateur theatrical presentations. In contrast to the strongly anti-U.S. 2007 production (which featured the nations of the world uniting against, and defeating, the belligerent "super power"), this year's artistic offering in Asmara had a more societal focus. The play's theme centered on encouraging the older generation to properly counsel the younger generation about the traumas related to living in a war-torn society. Another Liberation Day theatrical production in the city of Segeneity followed a more xenophobic theme. The play featured a young Eritrean soldier who is killed while attempting to flee the country in order to marry his fiancée living abroad. The play's presumed moral appears two-fold: a reminder to Eritreans that duty to their country takes precedence over personal desires, and that attempting to leave Eritrea can

only result in disaster.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: The "blame America" official speech by President Isaias has become standard fare for Liberation Day.

Isaias' anti-U.S./Western rhetoric in his direct address to the Eritrean people nonetheless paled before various public statements he made to the international press in a spate of recent interviews, in which he blamed the CIA and UNHCR for luring away the country's youth and provided dire warnings to his fellow Eritreans that all that truly awaits them beyond Eritrea's borders are refugee camps, prostitution, and hardship. End Comment.

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